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The spread of
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Spread of Co-operation.

BY H. W. WOLFF.

Reprinted from the "Economic Review," July, 1900.

PUBLISHED BY
THE CO-OPERATIVE UNION LIMITED, LONG MILLGATE, MANCHESTER.

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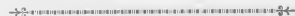
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THE SPREAD OF CO-OPERATION,

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THE periodical gatherings of the International Co-operative Alliance furnish welcome opportunities for comparing notes as to the progress made by Co-operation in various countries. The reports prepared for the congress which assembled at Paris, July 18th to 22nd, 1900, afford satisfactory proof that the movement, to which working men have been taught to look for an improvement of their condition by self-help, is not only steadily growing in force wherever it is already established, but that it is also carrying its sway further and further on new ground. There could be no more conclusive testimony to the fact that the alliance is serving its purpose.

THE UNITED KINGDOM.

The United Kingdom continues to maintain its general lead, though in point of number of societies Germany far exceeds it. It is surprising to learn that in Great Britain as many as 556 registered co-operative societies still hold aloof from the union, preferring the weakness of isolation to the strength of combination. The number of societies composing the union has only increased in the last

twelvemonth from 1,640 to 1,651; but this is explained by the fact that the prevailing tendency in the British co-operative world is altogether in the direction of strengthening and extending existing societies, rather than of starting new ones—for which a great deal may be said. The collective roll of members has lengthened from 1,646,078 to 1,729,976; the collective share capital has grown from £19,759,039 to £21,381,527; the annual sales have increased from £65,460,871 to £69,835,000; the investments from £11,681,296 to £13,469,339; and the profits from £7,165,753 to £7,823,272. All this is in respect of the 1,613 societies which have made returns. The characteristic features referred to are most noticeable in the retail distributive societies, the number of which has increased only by 5, to 1,473, whereas the sales have gone up from £42,578,299 to £45,047,446. The membership in these societies has at the same time grown by 78,341, to 1,617,460. The two Wholesale Societies, as usual, show a substantial increase in their sales, viz., from £16,267,078 to £19,226,564. From the very trifling increase in the number of productive societies, only by six, and the actual decline in their sales by £175,745, one might be tempted to conclude that the productive movement is on the wane. All the decline, however, occurs in the baking and corn-milling societies, and more particularly in the productive departments of this description belonging to the Wholesale Societies. Otherwise there is an increase. The societies now stand at 153, with £2,725,935 annual sales; and profits have risen from £166,268 to £178,871. The movement, therefore, is still sound and strong.

For the first time the annual report has something to show in the way of co-operative banks. In England there are not yet great results to boast of, though such banks as that at Newport, in Monmouthshire, and that at Finsbury Park are making steady progress in their small way. But in Ireland the village bank has been found a most valuable addition to co-operative machinery, and there is already an array of about sixty such banks to testify to the utility of the institution, none of which has ever made a bad debt.

Co-operative societies for the pursuit of agriculture just about maintain their old status; but co-operative dairies are multiplying, and co-operative insurance is likewise extending.

Educational work has received grants to the amount of £57,595; there is scarcely a society now which has not its educational department, and the Women's Co-operative Guild is everywhere making its presence felt.

Again, from the returns made by 224 societies—there are more which might have replied—it appears that no less than £5,147,526 has been laid out in the construction of improved working-men's dwellings, for the most part (to the extent of £3,402,006) in the way of repayable advances made to members building their own houses. In all, 24,038 houses have been built; and of these 4,247, representing a value of £915,397, remain the societies' own property. A noticeable impetus has been given to this building movement by the Royal Arsenal Society of Woolwich, which proposes to build, by degrees, no fewer than 3,500 houses on its own freehold land, to be let to members on ninety-nine years' leases.

FRANCE.

The tale which France has to tell is, in the main, encouraging and satisfactory. Co-operative production, from the days of the Revolution the pet child of French co-operators, is extending apace, especially away from the great industrial centres, where it struck root first. Those centres have now grown sufficiently strong to be able to act as nurseries for wider districts. The adoption by the *Travail* of the British system of increasing their capital by the enlistment of non-working members has proved a decided success, and bids fair to become tolerably common. This may help to make co-operative production independent of the favour by which it still benefits, and benefited more particularly while the Great Exhibition was in preparation, shown by imperial and local authorities in the preferential assignment of contracts. M. Gide boasts that, with its 250 co-operative workshops, France still maintains the lead among countries in the matter of co-operative production. On the other hand, it is disappointing to find that profit-sharing, which is likewise a practice upon which the French are wont to pride themselves, has entered a period of stagnation. Either under the influence of returned good times workmen are too well off, or else the tension between employers and employe^e has become too severe for amicable arrangements to be made. In any case the practice does not spread, and comparatively little interest is shown in it. However, there is one feather of which French co-operators are in a position to make a show in their cap, and that is that most of their co-operative stores practise profit-sharing. Unfortunately their profits

continue only trifling. The number of co-operative stores continues large. Indeed it is supposed to have increased. But there is no account kept of their numbers, and the societies carefully conceal the amount of their sales, dreading taxation for "profits" by a legislature and administration which foolishly subsidise with one hand while taxing with the other. A good time is believed to have set in for French co-operative stores. Learning wisdom from the experience of socialist co-operators in Belgium, who raise large party funds by means of co-operative supply, French socialists are abandoning their anti-co-operative attitude and becoming friendly. There has been much talk of the construction of improved working men's dwellings by means of co-operative building societies, and, to meet the popular demand, Government and the Chambers have made some public funds available for the purpose. But the result is disappointing. There are only fourteen building societies; and all the building that they have done scarcely exceeds £40,000. Co-operative banking is likewise still under a cloud, except in the country districts, where M. Durand has set up the Raiffeisen banner, and, with the help of the clergy, multiplies his humble but useful village banks—similar to what we have in Ireland—by the score. The "pride of place" among French co-operative institutions, as regards numbers, belongs to the agricultural syndicates, the figure for which is now put at 2,500, with 800,000 members. Much of their growth and prosperity is unreal, due to Government favour, to gifts, and to subsidies. And even so, in respect of magnitude of transactions and variety of form they

are outstripped by agricultural co-operation in Germany. However, they have one feature to distinguish them to their advantage, and that is their good understanding and unity among themselves. In point of organisation they differ almost as much as do French supply or productive societies, various sections adopting strikingly different systems. But in their unions, which are capitally organised, they all stand shoulder to shoulder, supporting and acting with one another.

GERMANY.

Germany continues all alive with co-operative action. Its army of co-operative societies has in the past year grown from 16,069 to 16,912. The majority of these, that is 10,850 (as compared with 10,259 in 1898), are co-operative credit associations. However, German co-operation now assumes a great variety of forms. Its growth is more particularly apparent in respect of agricultural co-operative institutions, and more specifically of agricultural credit institutions—a fact in a great measure due to the substantial encouragement given to certain types of societies by the several Governments, resulting in large additions to the co-operative ranks, but under conditions which suggest hot-house forcing and precarious existence, rather than *bond-fide* developments called for by a genuine demand and reliance on self-help. To set against this there is the gratifying fact to record that most unions of the kind referred to appear to be patching up their differences and combining for common action, under pressure from exacting merchants' "rings." Thus, united agricultural co-operation promises to show a remarkably strong front. Quanti-

tatively, the most striking results have, as usual, been attained by the co-operative banks of the Schulze-Delitzsch type, which are rather middle-class than working-men's societies. The 862 credit associations of this species making full returns show a collective membership of 497,111, with £6,082,846 share capital, and £1,979,907 reserve fund, and, with the help of these resources, a business—that is, advances made—to the amount of £95,363,263. When we come to the unions of small agricultural banks of other types, we find the results shrink, as one would think, out of all proportion. Thus, 3,149 banks of the Haas type are shown to have lent out only £3,467,915, and 2,014 Raiffeisen banks of the straightest sort only £1,510,301. It is true their loans were granted for very much longer periods, and therefore, as a matter of account, represent very much larger sums. Moreover, it ought to be borne in mind that they are very much smaller, and deal with a much poorer class of members. Apart from industries practised in connection with agriculture, such as wine-pressing, distilling, and the like, co-operative production indicates little progress, societies having increased from 179 to 198. However, agricultural productive societies have gone up from 1,932 to 2,017, and co-operative dairies now number 682, with 50,638 members. Supply societies (distributive co-operation) suffer a great deal from traders' persecution abetted by Parliament. Their number has gone down from 1,396 to 1,373. On the other hand, co-operative building societies have multiplied from 192 to 244, and are proving more active and successful every year.

AUSTRIA.

Co-operation in Austria shares to a considerable extent the more salient features of the German type. It is built up on the same foundations, and experiences a similar treatment at the hands of Government and the trading classes. Supply societies and Schulze-Delitzsch banks—the latter forming the backbone of the co-operative organisations existing—are under a cloud. Raiffeisen banks and agricultural societies find themselves petted and coddled, subsidized, and generally favoured. However, amid all their bounty, the authorities take care to insist upon the adoption of sound rules, and are strict in the inspection of accounts. Therefore they may be said to be doing good in a questionable way. In addition to the peculiar characteristics already referred to, Austrian co-operation has this typical feature, that it is hopelessly split up by divisions dictated by race-feeling. The Germans have their own unions, the Poles theirs, the Czechs again keep themselves wholly apart, and lately the Slovenians have set up their own little cluster of societies. In all, Austria now possesses 5,092 co-operative societies, of which number 4,032 are credit associations, and 2,048 are those of the Raiffeisen type—that is, small village societies. The distributive or supply societies number 712, and did in 1898 a business of only £2,700,000. Co-operative production and co-operative building are backward.

HUNGARY.

Co-operation is very diversified in Hungary, and is evidently spreading; but there are hardly any statistics to quote from. Co-operative banks continue to lead the

way. A Hungarian publication states 1,002 to be in existence. However, it is doubtful if all these deserve the name of "co-operative," and if of those which deserve it more than a small portion practise really the best kind of Co-operation. For Government and rich people have meddled in the matter, and set up their great Central banks, one of them endowed with £240,000, to lend to people and lead them away from self-reliance. One of these Central banks is reported answerable for as many as 701 local banks formed with its money. Furthermore, Parliament has insisted upon forcing upon co-operators a law which, in the teeth of a protest raised by their central board, places obstacles in the way of that unlimited liability without which Raiffeisen banks, the favourite form of co-operative credit association in the country, cannot exist, inasmuch as without it people grow careless. This result is said to be already showing itself. Transylvania has a cluster of very good Raiffeisen banks, organised, together with very successful co-operative wine-presses, from Neuwied. Some Magyars will have it that these banks are assuming something of a political character, as a pro-German institution. Elsewhere "Christian," *videlicet* Roman Catholic, banks have been set up. A curious experiment is in progress, namely, of extending co-operative distribution by means of a Central bank, endowed by Count Karolyi, who has been very generous in his support of Co-operation. By this means, up to the end of 1899, as many as fifty-six co-operative stores had been started. There is a good deal of co-operative distribution independently of this, bearing, generally speaking, a "class" character, but

scarcely any co-operative production. The number of co-operative building societies has increased to 390, and there are fifty-nine co-operative dairies.

SWITZERLAND.

The country which has comparatively the most marked progress to show is Switzerland, where very active and capable men have been strenuously at work for some years, establishing, organising, uniting. The present number of co-operative societies in Switzerland is 3,400, as compared with 3,100 in 1898, and only 2,400 in 1895. The majority of these are agricultural. There are as many as 1,400 dairy societies, and 360 for the improvement of breeds of cattle. In an agricultural country like Switzerland such societies are much appreciated, more particularly among the smaller folk, the village societies dealing in ordinary household necessities as well as in specifically agricultural articles. However, there is an almost total absence of agricultural banks; and since the Report makes no reference to the great *Schweizerische Volksbank*, which is generally co-operative, and has become a gigantic institution, carrying on business all over the country, but which is not in the union, it looks as if co-operative credit were quite unknown in Switzerland. Co-operative distribution has of late years developed remarkably well. There are, indeed, in the Co-operative Union, only 110 societies; but these number among them 81,200 members, out of a total of 111,200 reported as belonging to all co-operative societies in Switzerland. The large society of Basel, which in respect of some of its

arrangements leaves even our great British societies behind, alone musters about 19,000 strong. Pending the creation of a wholesale co-operative society, which is held to be very desirable, the distributive societies maintain a centre for common purchases, the turnover of which stood, in 1899, at 3,300,000 francs, as compared with 1,800,000 francs in 1896. The union of agricultural supply societies in Eastern Switzerland, which consists of 125 societies, in the same way provides for a certain amount of purchases in common. Productive co-operation is for the time still in abeyance, although the leaders of the movement have come round a good deal from their former opinion adverse to co-operative production and to profit-sharing. However, the prevailing opinion is that production must, and should, be dependent upon distribution, and that, therefore, a strong fabric of distributive co-operation must above all things be built up, to furnish a market to production. In the meantime, the newly-formed Swiss union is extremely active in promoting education of every kind among the people among whom it hopes to work. No doubt, with such workers as the Swiss union possesses, and with so valuable a coign of vantage already occupied, Swiss co-operation may be assumed to have a brilliant future before it, which is likely to be all the more rapidly attained in view of the direct relations recently established with British co-operation.

ITALY.

Co-operation in Italy has recently passed through a trying period. During the past twenty years Co-operation

has grown and developed to such an extent that it has been felt necessary to prepare a new co-operative law, which, as an official report just issued by the Ministry of Commerce intimates, is already lying ready in one of the ministerial pigeon-holes, awaiting a quieter time for its consideration in Parliament. However, a couple of years ago the Italian nation was in a state of uproar, under the leading of people who call themselves Socialists, though it does not by any means follow that they are such. The cause of that mutiny was not socialism but excessive taxation, more particularly of foodstuffs. As it happened, the discontent which called itself Socialism is strongly represented in co-operative societies, more particularly productive and labour societies, which have showed a great development. Most of these were dissolved by the police, many had their property confiscated, and though some have been re-constituted, a considerable number have succumbed for the time, and the whole movement has sustained a check. The leading form of Co-operation in Italy, as in Germany and Austria, is credit, upon the progress of which, during the past thirty-seven years (really only thirty-four), M. Luzzatti has written eloquently in the introduction to a volume of official statistics just published. As a matter of fact, co-operative credit has, along with other banking, and, indeed, business generally, yielded ground quite lately. The total number of co-operative banks (not counting the host of agricultural banks, *casse rurali* and *casse cattoliche*, with respect to which no statistics are published) stood for 1898 at only 696 (only 687 actually doing business), as compared with 730 (703 doing business) in 1893. Share capital (at

present standing at 103,733,000 lire), deposits (377,590,000 lire), loans (824,182,661 lire), profits (6,333,000 lire), have all receded. The official account tries to divert attention from this perfectly intelligible decline, by comparing the results of 1898 with those of twenty years ago. However, more seems to have been done by the banks in supporting other co-operative and provident institutions, aiding the erection of working men's dwellings, and providing loans to small cultivators and other poor people (*prestati sull'onore*) in a semi-charitable way. It is difficult, under the present official system of classification, to distinguish between productive and distributive societies, since societies are grouped according to the nature of the goods which they handle. Thus "agricultural" societies may be distributive or productive, and "foodstuff" societies the same. Co-operative production, though scattered and divided into many small establishments, is really stronger and more popular than would appear from the official tables. Societies of the constructive order had fallen in 1898 from 330 to 349, owing to the compulsory winding up of the large societies of *braccianti* and *muratori*, suspected of subversive aims. On the other hand, printing and lithographic societies, which are generally strong and well conducted, show an increase, from twenty-one to twenty-four. Textile societies still figure at six, manufacturing chemical societies have gone up from one to twenty-nine, societies turning out glass and cement wares from two to eleven, and so on. Distributive societies have increased from 445 to 508. But their business is small if measured by a British standard, though a few societies, such as the *Unione*

Militare (Rome), the *Unione Co-operativa* (Milan), and the supply society of *Sampierdarena* show considerable strength. Agricultural and viticultural societies have gone up from forty-two to fifty. This number, embracing productive as well as distributive societies, includes a few co-operative dairies, but none of the several hundreds of *comizi* and *sindacati* which we should identify with "co-operative agricultural societies," the growth and increased activity of which form one of the most salient features of co-operative development in Italy during the latest period.

BELGIUM.

Belgium is another country in which Co-operation is much influenced by socialist opinion. The socialist societies, *Vooruit*, *Maison du Peuple*, *le Progrès*, *la Populaire*, decidedly lead the entire movement. The *Vooruit* of Ghent has about 17,000 members; the *Maison du Peuple* of Brussels even more. The *Vooruit* last year set up its own new pretentious premises at a cost of £44,000. And the socialist tendency which preaches Co-operation as a means of providing funds for propagandist political action shows no signs of abatement. Otherwise distribution does not indicate the same strength, though the attention of co-operators is now mainly concentrated upon it, for the same reason which has led to a similar result in Switzerland, namely, that productive co-operators have become strongly impressed with the necessity of setting up co-operative distribution to provide them with a market. Accordingly, all efforts are now bent upon strengthening distribution. A union of distributive societies has been formed, which has been

joined thus far only by 43 out of 123 societies. Previously there was only a loose federation of committees. Societies do not mind joining the union, but, with curious inconsistency, they object to buying through a common channel. Among the thousand or so (there are no statistics kept) "co-operative societies" now existing a good many are not really co-operative at all; for instance, the so-called co-operative distilleries. Co-operative production is not really strong, because there is no sufficient market. The public do not encourage it; and working men have also lost faith in it, owing to past failures due to bad management and the incapacity of leaders. Accordingly societies, rise up and go down, as they did in England in early days. Nevertheless there are some printing and shoe works, carpenters' and joiners' societies, co-operative corn mills and the like, which do well. There are a few interesting specialities worth noting, such as the society of feather and flower workers at Brussels, and the sabot-makers of Cerfontaine. The Federation of People's Banks now embraces twenty-two societies, with 14,379 members, the turnover of which in 1898-99 figured at 422,079,911 francs, advances to the amount of 80,864,406 francs having been made in the year. The Belgian People's Banks are rendering particularly valuable service in strongly insisting, at the instance of M. Michaux, on what is technically called the *ristourne*—that is, what, in co-operative distribution, we call "dividend," i.e. the return of the profits to customers, in proportion to their custom, due provision having first been made for the reserve fund, for profit-sharing among employés, and for a limited dividend upon capital. The

sooner this practice becomes general the better will it be. In addition to the twenty-two *banques populaires*, there are something like 300 Raiffeisen village banks, most of them distinctively Romanist in character, and advisedly keeping out people who are not "good Catholics." Their transactions are not very large. The State Savings Bank also continues forming Raiffeisen banks of an undenominational type, which, under proper safeguards, it supplies with money. The more striking feature of Belgian Co-operation is, as elsewhere on the Continent, the rapid increase of agricultural societies, the formation of which is favoured by the Government. From 1897 to 1898 the number of co-operative dairies alone went up from 167, with 17,022 members, to 227 with 24,519 members. The latter are for the most part very small men, their mean holding in cows being 2.91. This is as it should be. In 1898 these dairies turned out among them 12,802,785 francs' worth of produce, mainly butter, at the rate of 522 francs per member.

NETHERLANDS.

In the Netherlands the number of registered co-operative societies has largely increased—from 595 in 1897 to 924 in 1900. Really the number is larger, for there are a good many societies co-operative in principle, but not so in form, which ought to be included in the list. These are mainly village societies, formed for the common purchase of necessities, or else for making advances to members. The registered loan and deposit societies still only number 87, but that is a great increase on the 28 registered in 1897; and though the business done is small, it is useful. The number quoted does not include

the denominational Roman Catholic village banks formed by the Boerenbond. Co-operative production is still very poorly represented, apart from the excellent building societies, by only 25 societies. The building societies, which are setting up working men's dwellings by the hundred, have increased from 59 in 1897 to 81. Co-operative dairies are another class of societies which show a striking increase, from 266 to 416, and are generally doing well. Agricultural supply societies have gone up from 122 to 166, agricultural sale societies from 10 to 16. Ordinary distributive societies number only 72, as compared with 55 in 1897. They are well managed and successful. There are 3 butcheries and 34 (as compared with 22) bakeries; moreover, 14 societies for the sale of fuel, or fuel and potatoes, which is a distinct Dutch speciality. There can be no doubt that in that most businesslike of all businesslike countries, which has the Hague for its capital, under able leadership Co-operation is making very satisfactory progress.

DENMARK.

The distinctive feature of Co-operation in Denmark still is its remarkable strength in specifically country districts. This is partially due to an antiquated law which, in the interest of shopkeepers, prohibits the carrying on of "trade" by other than the urban trader within a radius of seven miles from every town. Now it is a debatable point what constitutes "trade;" and the co-operative societies are not given the benefit of the doubt, except they be composed of inhabitants of rural districts establishing societies in the neutral zone. Such

societies are ruled not to be "traders" within the meaning of the law. Another explanation which reads oddly to British eyes is this, that the standard of education is higher in rural districts than in urban, and that townsmen are not yet sufficiently educated to be qualified to practise Co-operation. This is owing to the excellent "people's high schools" established in country districts only, for the benefit of the peasant population. Under such circumstances it is not surprising that Danish Co-operation bears a distinctively agricultural character. There are at present no fewer than 1,052 co-operative dairies, with a members' roll of 162,000, which employ for that purpose fully four-fifths of the milk turned out in the country, and sell butter annually to the value of about £7,000,000. There are 25 co-operative bacon factories, having 54,000 members, and converting three-fifths of all the pigs reared in the country into ham and bacon, to the value of about £1,000,000 per annum. The co-operative "Egg Export Society" now numbers 22,000 members, and disposes of about one-sixth of all the eggs carried out of the kingdom, to the value of £110,000 per annum. In addition there are breeding societies, sale societies, purchase societies, and so on. Indeed, one peculiar feature of Danish agricultural Co-operation is the subdivision of the great host of societies according to distinct objects; so that a man having many interests may belong at the same time to as many as eight or ten different societies—one for horse breeding, another for cattle breeding or pig breeding, a bacon factory, a dairy, a common purchase and a sale society, an egg society, a honey society, and so on. Each particular trade is

carried on by distinct societies, and this system is said to result in good business. The agricultural supply societies have their own wholesale department. Apart from all this, there are 837 distributive societies, with 130,331 members, showing an increase of 133 in the last year. Of these only eight have their seat in towns. All except 133 sell only to members. Co-operative production scarcely counts for anything outside the agricultural area. Indeed, practically all Danish Co-operation is summed up in the word "agriculture." And for intending agricultural Co-operation there could not be a better model to study than the country of Harold and Canute.

SWEDEN.

Within the last year Sweden has taken its place among nations practising Co-operation. The credit of this is in a great measure due to Mr. G. H. von Koch, who a few years ago visited this country with a view to studying co-operative institutions, and who succeeded in September last in bringing together at Stockholm the first Swedish Co-operative Congress, attended by 43 delegates, representing 40 societies, with about 8,000 members. This Congress forthwith constituted itself the Swedish Co-operative Union. The second annual Congress is to meet this summer. The membership has in the meanwhile slightly grown. There is an attempt being made to form a Wholesale Society, which really is the keynote now making itself heard throughout co-operative Europe. Everywhere it has come to be understood that the most important step now to be taken is the formation of a Wholesale Society to focus

business. Since there are in Sweden 324 co-operative societies, all of them distributive, but for the most part not selling on the Rochdale plan, and as interest in the co-operative movement has become vivid among the working population—more particularly those engaged in the timber trade—there ought to be ample scope for development as well as for the perfecting of existing machinery.

SPAIN.

The most encouraging progress recently made in the organisation of co-operative societies in Spain has been rudely interfered with by the Cuban war. The general tendency, however, is still towards development and union. There are known to be in the 35 provinces of Spain 263 co-operative societies, whereof 225 are distributive, 25 productive, 1 building, and 12 credit; but there are more, of which no account is kept, especially in Catalonia and Asturias. The movement is most strongly developed in Catalonia, where there are 121 societies, 110 being distributive. The productive societies are of all descriptions—agricultural and horticultural, societies of carpenters and joiners, metal workers, vermicelli makers, armourers, bakers, etc. Among the supply societies, those doing the largest business are the military and civil service supply associations, one of which, at Corunna, did a trade in 1896 of 778,423 pesetas or francs.

RUSSIA.

Russia, though still very backward in respect of Co-operation, is evidently making honest efforts to take its

place by the side of other countries. The number of the co-operative societies subject to official control appears to be increasing very slowly indeed, that is, at the rate of only nine societies per annum, and had in this way, by the close of 1896, grown only to 282. But it is to be assumed that there are other societies of which the authorities take no account, more particularly since the list includes no productive societies whatever, nor agricultural, or gardening, or labour societies. What Co-operation exists with official sanction is still very tightly enclosed in official uniform. It is in the main governed by "model rules," drafted and sanctioned by the "Permanent Commission" of seven, appointed in 1896. The statistics to hand are very incomplete. Co-operation appears to have pushed its way into all provinces. For, although the Baltic provinces, having a German population, provide for it a peculiar stronghold, it has established its hold in a small way even upon Central Asia, which has eleven societies, and on Siberia, which has nine. Distributive Co-operation, though still poorly supported, and benefiting its members to a considerable extent by discount arrangements with other traders, as well as providing them with questionable credit, is evidently ambitious. For it has set up, as auxiliary productive departments, fourteen bakeries, two flour-mills, one slaughter-house, and four clothing-shops. Moreover, the societies in the Moscow district are trying their hand at a Wholesale Society, which the St. Petersburgers hope to eclipse by a Wholesale Society intended for all Russia. The trade of 100 societies officially given, having among them 55,294 members, a share capital of

£235,838, and a reserve fund of £42,585, is returned by Colonel Gerebiatieff as £1,485,479, yielding £70,731 profit. Supposing there to be no mistake about this, it indicates considerable strength in capital, which M. Gerebiatieff explains to be very essential, inasmuch as the societies buy largely on credit, and are credited and allowed favourable terms, in proportion to their capital. There are some strong societies connected with particular services, such as the Imperial Guard, M. Putiloff's railway works, and the Okhta Gunpowder Factory. The goods dealt in are in the main food-stuffs, drapery wares, boots and shoes, and wines and spirits. There are ostensibly three varieties of co-operative credit institutions, all of them working for rural constituencies. Of one kind, formed since 1896, more or less on the German model, but with very free adaptations, there were at the end of 1896, 634, having 212,734 members, a share capital of £649,898, and a reserve fund of £185,658 and making advances in the course of the year to the amount of £1,898,290. Another form of bank is that of the Auxiliary Volostnoi Bank, which in the same year numbered 575, employing a capital of £358,280 belonging to the volosts, £304,473 held in trust for orphans and other private persons, and £62,489 belonging to peasants, with the aid of which they lent out £558,161. The third variety is represented by the 262 village banks, which in 1896 held £204,552 capital, and £125,322 deposits, and lent out £239,601.

FINLAND.

Only quite recently has Finland taken its place among nations practising Co-operation. There are as yet no

figures to report, except it be in respect of co-operative dairies, which, in a country exporting annually 13,000 tons of butter, have very naturally managed to gain a footing before other Co-operation could be thought of. But the birth of national Co-operation among the Finns is of striking interest; for here, as in Denmark, it was national humiliation which drove the nation into the arms of Co-operation with all the devotion of patriotic enthusiasm. The governed, seeing their political quasi-independence gone, came to a unanimous silent resolve to concentrate all their efforts upon the promotion of economic and intellectual welfare. And the Government, having ruthlessly destroyed the Finnish constitution, showed itself willing to salve the wound by favouring an economic evolution which promised a large increase of taxable value. It has given the country, only this year, a co-operative law; and it allows the society formed to propagate Co-operation an annual grant of about £8,000, out of national taxation, materially increased, generally speaking, for military and administrative purposes. That propagandist society has very appropriately taken the name of *Pellervo*, the mystical hero of the great Finnish epopee of *Kalevala*, who sows useful seed in desert places. Something like 75 per cent. of the population of Finland being agricultural, of course agriculture is the first calling to which Co-operation has been applied, on the model, partly, of the French agricultural syndicates, partly of the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society. And certainly the promises of success seem fair. For nowhere has Co-operation obtained from the first start anything like the same general support. Small and great

seem to vie with one another in its promotion and prosecution, taxing themselves freely, in subscriptions, to the extent of as much as £80 a year one man. Special University lectures are given at the University and elsewhere, and are attended by many hundreds. University students spend their vacation time in carrying the co-operative message into the remotest nooks and corners of the whilom kingdom. The Co-operative Review *Pellervo* has rapidly increased in circulation to 28,000, more than any other Finnish periodical, not a newspaper, can boast. And two national poets have hymned the praise of Co-operation in verses which one may hear sung in all parts of the country. The local organisers are extremely hopeful of fruitful results.

ROUMANIA AND SERVIA.

The reports on co-operative progress made in Roumania and Serbia are still in abeyance. In Serbia, Co-operation, more specifically of credit and applied to agriculture, is known to have advanced not a little within the last three years, and to be answering well.

INDIA.

In India there are co-operative branches of the Raiffeisen type already at work in Mysore, and more are to be started in the North-West Provinces. Moreover, a modest beginning has recently been made in the organisation of Co-operation of the Rochdale type. The "Indian Pioneers Co. Ltd.," which is a co-operative society, was registered in 1893. It has now 388 members, and Rs. 8,724 paid up on 1,402 shares. Its annual trade is about Rs. 51,000. In conjunction with

three other societies, more recently formed, and numbering among them only 64 members, with 11,309 rupees paid upon share capital, this society has formed "The Co-operative Union of India." It is a very small beginning, but other movements which have grown to be great have had smaller.

WEST INDIES.

In the West Indies likewise, Co-operation, which, the recent inquiry by Commission shows to be very badly wanted, but also full of promise, is beginning to stir. There are a few stores there. Great efforts are being made to organise the small cultivators, black and white, in societies like French agricultural syndicates, to buy necessities, and cultivate and sell agricultural produce in common, so as to bring back prosperity to the wonderfully fertile islands which sugar has left in the lurch. This is a work which every one with a heart in his body should, and assuredly will, wish to succeed. The negroes are taking to the idea. And since a few weeks *Barbados* has a co-operative bank, to which before long one or two more are to be added.

Co-operation, then, may be said to be making way steadily all the world over. It is spreading in virtue of the best recommendation that could be put forward, that is, its own success. There are still plenty of worlds for it to conquer, and no doubt it will, in due course, subdue them.

HENRY W. WOLFF.

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